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English only

Towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration: summary of the preparatory meeting for the high-level segment

Summary

The present conference room paper presents a summary of the preparatory events for the Economic and Social Council high-level segment held on 16 and 17 March 2005 and 5 April 2005. The preparatory events took the form of a series of round tables that covered a range of sectoral and cross-cutting themes related to the theme of the high-level segment, including on the eradication of poverty and hunger; health and mortality; education and literacy; environmental sustainability; gender equality and the empowerment of women; partnerships and financing; building State capacity to meet the Millennium Development Goals, including human rights, governance, institutions and human resources; and national strategies to achieve the Goals.

The summaries, which highlight the key questions raised in the round tables, demonstrate the richness of the discussion that took place on the theme of the 2005 high-level segment. The issues papers and summaries of both the high-level segment preparatory meeting and the high-level segment itself on the theme for 2005 will be made available by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in a publication, which will be released in time for the 2006 Economic and Social Council high-level segment.

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Introduction

In order to provide support for the theme and to contribute to the successful outcome of the 2005 high-level segment, preparatory events were organized on 16-17 March and 5 April 2005 to allow for all stakeholders, including representatives of Member States, the UN system, academia, foundations, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, to analyze the theme of the high-level segment "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities".

The objective of the preparatory events was to enable the stakeholders to assess progress made, to identify existing obstacles and constraints, and identify necessary actions to overcome them. New challenges and emerging issues faced by member states at the global, regional and national level were also highlighted. The events also provided an opportunity to present and share best practices and innovative approaches so that they can be sued to inspire stakeholders to achieve the MDS and the broader United Nations development agenda.

The preparatory events were situated in the context of the other ongoing preparations for the 2005 World Summit, including the Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change titled *'A more secure world: Our shared responsibility'; the report of the Millennium Project titled 'Investing in Development: A practical plan to achieve the millennium development goals';* the Secretary-General's March 2005 report titled *'In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all';* and most recently, the draft outcome document submitted by the President of the General to Member States for the Summit.

The main preparatory event on 16-17 March 2005 featured two keynote addresses, the first by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Millennium Project and the second by Mr. Francois Bourguignon, Chief Economist and Senior Vice-President, Development Economics of the World Bank Group. Professor Sachs stressed a number of key messages, namely the need for bold and urgent action, the importance of mutual responsibility, that the technologies required to help achieve the MDGs are available but must be shared and that there has to be some rethinking is needed on how resources are allocated. In this connection, investment in global public goods was seen as key. Consistent with investment in global goods is one of the key recommendations of the Millennium Project report which is the rapid implementation of a number of "quick wins", including the mass distribution of insecticide-treated bednets, elimination of fees for primary education, expansion of school meals programmes, distribution of de-worming medicines to school children in affected areas and expanded treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

The conclusions from each roundtable clearly demonstrated strong interlinkages among all the goals and that meeting some goals will have positive spillover effects on others. In this regard, investment in women and girls was seen as central to meeting the key goals. Many also agreed that improving access to basic services and its quality, prospects for scaling up, sustainability and accountability required good governance at the national, regional and international levels. The meeting also welcomed a number of Quick Wins identified by the Millennium Project Report.

Overall, it was noted that important progress is seen in some of the large countries but progress elsewhere is uneven. The special needs of Africa and the least developed countries were acknowledged as was the need to address the challenges of fragile states and economies. The resolution of conflicts, the building administrative capacity and the contributions of all stakeholders were seen as important opportunities for achieving the goals. The discussions also revealed that there are still some important gaps to address such as

reproductive health and rights, especially in the context of the health-related MDGs, and the role of humanitarian action in achieving the MDGs.

Among some of the specific recommendations were the following:

- The hunger-poverty interlinkage requires that a twin-track approach be followed, combining investment in longer term development programmes with the establishment of social safety nets and transfers;
- The removal of education fees should be a priority and targets for funds allocated to the education sector should be set, both in terms of percentage of GDP of developing countries and of a global amount of ODA;
- The strengthening of health systems to provide equitable universal access to primary health care should be undertaken as a matter of urgency, including the restocking of health workers through education and training;
- The urgency of completing the Doha Round of multilateral negotiations was stressed as well as the need to find long-term solutions to make commodities an engine of growth;
- Economic, social, political, legal and cultural structures perpetuating gender inequality still need to be removed in many countries. Strengthened technical capacity and adequate resources and efforts to empower women are required;
- Consideration should be given to re-asses the goal of achieving a significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers since current projections are that 1 billion people will live in slums by 2020, therefore, the goal, if met, would only impact on 10% of slum dwellers;
- Donors should increase their ODA to 0.7 % of GDP and work towards increased harmonization and predictability. They should also base their aid policies on their partner country needs for achieving the MDG according to their MDG-based poverty reduction strategy. Innovative sources of finance can play a complementary role to ODA and should be explored according to the Monterrey consensus.

The preparatory meeting of 17 March 2005 closed with a keynote address by Mr. François Bourguignon, Chief Economist and Senior Vice-President for Development Economics of the World Bank who underlined the importance of strengthening aid effectiveness by enhancing the absorptive capacity of developing countries to deal with the increase in ODA flows. In his view, the MDG-based Poverty Reduction Strategies must be more ambitious, have *strong country ownership*, and place Governments and civil society at the center. Growth strategies must be a core component of the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) if income-poverty targets are to be met.

Among his key conclusions were the following:

- Absorptive capacity should be addressed in country PRSPs in a way that is linked with medium term expenditure programs and capacity building efforts;
- Sequencing is a key element – infrastructure→ education → other MDG services with externalities;
- Donors should improve aid effectiveness through greater predictability of ODA flows, and should harmonize and align practices with recipient needs and strategies;
- Recipients on the other hand, must ensure broad commitment to PRS strategy, and being publicly "accountable" through strengthening governance and institutions;
- The Doha trade agenda should be completed expeditiously;
- The question of debt burden and mechanisms for debt relief must be revisited.

Overall, there was consensus that failure to achieve the millennium development goals will have consequences for the spread of disease, mass migration and threats to global security. It is within this context

that the discussions and recommendations of the ECOSOC high-level segment can help to inform the debate at the 2005 World Summit.

Summary Roundtable 1: Eradication of Poverty and Hunger

Lead organizations: FAO, IFAD and WFP

The Roundtable on "Eradication of Poverty and Hunger" focused on concrete options and specific recommendations for achieving the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG1): halving the proportion of the world's population suffering from extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. Despite some progress at the global level in reaching MDG1, stark differences exist among regions, countries, areas within countries and population groups. Today, 1.2 billion people live in extreme poverty in developing countries and countries in transition and 852 million are undernourished. Rural people in developing countries and countries which are predominantly rural are among the poorest in the world. Women, children, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups experience higher incidence of poverty and hunger in all countries. Hunger and poverty are closely interlinked and need to be addressed in a comprehensive approach. Poverty is the principal cause of chronic hunger. At the same time, hunger is a major cause of poverty as it deprives people of their full potential to work and learn.

The roundtable and the subsequent inter-active dialogue with UN member states, representatives of UN organizations and members of civil society focused on a number of proposals and suggestions for achieving MDG1. Discussions took place and actions were highlighted in the following areas:

- The interdependence of all MDGs and implications for policies and programmes;
- The need to focus policies and investments on rural areas and agriculture;
- Priority setting at country level and national poverty reduction strategies;
- The role of the international community in establishing an enabling international environment for the reduction of hunger and poverty;
- The need for participatory approaches and local capacity building for the empowerment of poor people and vulnerable groups and the importance of human rights and rights-based approaches to poverty and hunger reduction.

Exploiting the linkages among MDGs and between hunger and poverty

Many speakers agreed that the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration can not be viewed in isolation from each other. Instead, the MDGs form a comprehensive framework for sustainable economic and social development. This becomes especially apparent in the case of the hunger and poverty related goals. Poverty is as much a cause of hunger as it is a consequence: physical abilities of hungry people are compromised while their physical and cognitive development may be permanently damaged, if hunger and malnutrition happen at an early age. Hunger seriously limits the ability of people to work, learn and earn income.

- The hunger-poverty inter-linkage requires a twin-track approach: combining investments in long-term development which creates employment and income with the establishment of social safety nets and transfers, including immediate food and nutrition assistance programmes, and broader measures to ensure fulfillment of all basic needs.

- In general, the balance between social policies and transfers and those geared towards long-term development by enhancing the capacity of the productive sectors needs to be carefully considered

keeping in mind that they are interrelated. Achieving MDG1 contributes decisively to the achievement of other goals: reducing hunger increases school attendance, the ability to learn and improves resistance to disease thus facilitating the achievement of health and education-related MDGs. Action on MDG1 should therefore receive high priority.

- Strategies at country level to achieve the MDGs and other internationally agreed goals should exploit synergies and inter-linkages among the goals and targets.

Promoting agriculture and rural development as an effective and efficient strategy to achieve MDG1

While economic growth is necessary for sustainable poverty and hunger reduction, the composition of growth is critical. Even under conditions of strong and sustained economic performance at the national level, many people may be left behind or remain untouched by economic expansion. There was broad consensus that poverty and hunger reduction strategies must take into account the fact that 75 per cent of the world's poor and hungry people live in rural areas and depend, directly or indirectly, on agriculture for their livelihoods.

- Implementation of the twin-track approach should give priority to agriculture and rural development to create income and employment opportunities. Strategic and programmatic priorities as well as resource allocations should be modified and adapted accordingly. Recent initiatives by the African Union to increase funding and implement comprehensive programmes for agriculture and rural development are important positive signs in that respect.

- Enhancing employment and income growth in the rural areas entails scaling-up actions to improve the productivity of smallholder agriculture, promoting sustainable use of natural resources, improving rural infrastructure, research and communications, facilitating the functioning of markets and enhancing rural institutions.

- At the national and sub-national level, development programmes and poverty reduction strategies need to focus more specifically on those areas and communities where a significant proportion of people suffer from malnutrition and high incidence of poverty. National strategies need to promote the development of those economic sectors and activities on which poor people depend for their livelihoods.

- Emphasis also needs to be placed on diversification towards rural non-farm activities, including value-added production, and strengthening productive capacities of micro, small and medium enterprises, a process in which women in rural areas play a major role. Rural development and diversification into activities up and downstream of agriculture are key to the dynamic process of economic transformation.

Priority setting and action at country level is key to the achievement of MDG1 and other goals

Participants recognized that actions to reduce poverty and hunger need to be taken first and foremost at the country level. All countries are encouraged to put in place concrete targets, plans, road maps, timetables and monitoring mechanisms for achieving MDG1. National poverty reduction strategies need to take into account the concerns of all stakeholders, including the poor, in poverty reduction efforts. Developing countries need to be assisted in this process by the international community through capacity building, and financial and institutional support.

- The capacity of developing countries to formulate and implement their own response to the challenges posed by persistently high levels of poverty and hunger needs to be strengthened.
- Poor people and their organizations must actively participate in the development of policies and programmes for poverty reduction and countries are encouraged to develop and implement strategies that give poor people a stronger voice.
- PRSPs must emphasize agricultural and rural development issues within a broad national programme that brings together policy change, institutional development, and material investments based on a consultation process that involves all concerned groups, including poor people.
- Good governance and an appropriate investment climate are critical to effective implementation of PRSPs.
- The special needs of the urban poor also need to be addressed in poverty and hunger reduction programmes: pro-poor employment and asset generation, measures to assist the urban poor in meeting their basic needs such as housing, nutrition and water, food safety, health and primary education.
- A 20th century *Green Revolution* should be promoted in Africa which combines actions to significantly reduce the number of famines, invest in science and technology to improve the resilience of crops in chronic food insecure countries, raise agricultural productivity, and support land reform.

The international community has a critical role to play to support national efforts

The need to make further progress in meeting commitments on trade, debt relief and donor coordination was underscored as part of the proposed actions to be undertaken at the international level. There was also consensus that ODA in support of rural and agricultural development needed to be increased significantly. Increases in assistance from international actors should complement national priorities and strategies to target the poor and food insecure, both in rural and urban areas. Selected regions and groups of countries - such as Sub-Saharan Africa and the LDCs – also require a targeted and highly customized response. The creation of a fair and conducive international trade environment, especially on agriculture, is instrumental for national growth and poverty reduction efforts and for reaching the MDGs. Developing countries' ability to respond to expanded opportunities need to be strengthened.

National strategies and programmes to reduce poverty and hunger need to be supported by the international community, especially through substantially increased donor assistance and the establishment of an enabling political and economic global environment.

- Donors need to live up to their previously made commitments and increase ODA levels to 0.7% of GNP.

- The negative trend in development assistance in support of agriculture and rural development should be reversed and ODA for those sectors drastically increased and geared primarily towards poor people.

- The trade environment must undergo substantial reforms in order to benefit poor countries and their people. The success of the Doha round will depend to a large extent on success in agricultural trade negotiations. Progress needs to be made in reducing trade-distorting domestic support and export competition, and improving market access while taking account the food security and rural development needs, and livelihood concerns of developing countries.

- Programmes need to be put in place that enable small-holder farmers, processors and traders to take advantage of changes in the current trade regime and to cope better with competition in both foreign and domestic markets.

- Donor support is needed for scaling up of investments in the rural space especially core public investments in infrastructure, research and development, and education and skills to foster private sector and market development.

Focus on the most vulnerable groups, following participatory and human rights-based approaches is essential for reducing hunger and poverty

Many speakers underlined the fact that specific groups of people suffer higher incidence of hunger and poverty. Women and girls are overrepresented amongst the poorest all over the world. Indigenous and tribal peoples are likewise highly disadvantaged and lag behind in all development indicators. Actions to reduce hunger and poverty need to take into account the particular vulnerabilities faced by those groups.

- Women play an important role in the achievement of the MDG and their contributions need to be recognized and supported more widely by national as well as international actors.

- Secure access to land, as well as guaranteed property and inheritance rights are important tools for the economic empowerment of women and contribute to the overall welfare of the family.

- Women must be active participants in the development of country poverty reduction strategies to ensure that national plans address the constraints women face and support women's economic role and contribution.

- Poor children are the most vulnerable segment of society. Targeted initiatives such as school meals supplied by local production could have positive effects on a number of MDG-related targets (education and literacy, school attendance, nutrition) and should be scaled-up where appropriate.

- The challenges faced by indigenous peoples need to be included in national MDG reports. Data on poverty and hunger incidence need to be disaggregated to properly reflect differences among ethnic groups in a country.

  - Economic development and poverty reduction should not be achieved at the expense of indigenous peoples rights, i.e. by promoting extracting industries on indigenous peoples lands.

  - A robust process of consulting and empowering the poor and hungry is needed so that they can be effectively involved in the decisions being made at all levels that affect their wellbeing and livelihoods. In accord with the Millennium Declaration, efforts should be made to promote rights-based approaches, including the realization of the right to adequate food.

Summary Roundtable 2: Education and Literacy

Lead organizations: UNESCO and UNICEF

The international community has committed itself to promoting full literacy through quality universal primary education and quality adult literacy provisions This requires both formal and non-formal education for the next fifty years. The **Millennium Development Goals** focused on attaining universal primary education and eliminating gender disparities. This is a key component in reduction of poverty around the world. Unfortunately, many countries are not on track to attain the MDGs related to education. The international community should take concrete action to ensure that those goals are met. Therefore, the deliberations on this round table focused on how to attain the MDGs and identified lessons learned. The following issues were discussed:

- General findings in progress towards predetermined goals in education and literacy.
- Figures of quantitative considerations concerning education and literacy on a global and regional level.
- The importance of quality of education which included an identification and discussion of various positive initiatives in poor communities.
- The importance of exchanging best practices.
- The importance of girls' education and the gender factor.
- Political will and effective commitment to education and literacy in the global context.

Progress toward the MDGs

- The pace of progress is insufficient to attain the MDG targets related to education and literacy by 2015.

- Progress toward attaining the MDGs is more important today then twenty years ago as the world is much more complex due to the phenomena's such as globalization, disasters, insecurity and crisis.

Quantitative Considerations

- The number of out of school children for primary education is slowly reducing. This was the result of the expansion of formal schooling to children.

- In low income countries many children are requested to supplement family income rather than attending school. Although survival rates to grade 5 have generally increased there are still below 66% in half of the sub-Saharan African countries. In total 800 million adult are illiterate, which is 18% of adult world population. Of this figure around 2/3 are women.

Quality of Education and Positive initiatives

- To improve the quality of education it is important to strengthen human capacities of teachers. This is important as dysfunctional schools and low quality of education systems are wide spread.

- Decentralization and flexibility for teachers, including balancing their autonomy with a performance assessment had positive results in many countries.

- The issue of real importance in education is the involvement of the parents in the functioning of schools and generally the involvement of societies as a whole. Parents therefore need to be mobilized to value quality education as well as access to education.

The Exchange of Best Practices

- The importance of exchanging best practices in the education sector was highlighted as literacy goes beyond education and has much broader impacting on poverty alleviation, health, and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The Education of Girls

- Throughout the course of the meeting a lot of attention was paid to the issue of girls' education and to the gender factor in a general sense. Girl's education was stressed as a key to all the other international goals.

- By educating girls the world can trigger positive transformation in societies as empowerment of women has multiplier affect on the well being of communities.

- Transparent school management and accountability was judged crucial to ensure progress in involving girls and providing adequate education to them. In more practical terms incentive measures such as the provision of a school meal encourage girls to stay in school.

Political Will & Effective Commitment

- The roundtable agreed that much can be achieved if government, civil society, the United Nations and the donor community work together to support education in countries in need. It was also felt that the private sector could better advocate for education as an investment.

- Political will is key to attaining many of the commitment related to literacy and education. Education should be included in all development and poverty alleviation plans. Removing education fees should be a priority.

- In addition, it was suggested that funds allocated to the education sector should be around three percent of GDP for the developing countries. This could be complemented by Official Development Assistance up to the amount of $7 billion US Dollars per year.

- For significant improvements in the global level of education a long-term financial commitment is necessary to ensure that capacity is build up in the education sector. This would improve the quality of education in sustainable manner.

Summary Roundtable 3: Health and Mortality

Lead organizations: WHO, UNFPA, UNAIDS

The roundtable on "Health and Mortality" was attended by some 200 people with representatives of 50 Member States and a wide range of UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. Following their short presentations, the three panellists responded to several rounds of questions from the audience and engaged in a lively discussion over key issues in global health and development. The roundtable focused specifically on three areas as suggested by the Chair, namely:

- where are we on the MDGs and other international development goals, specifically those related to health, and what are the main challenges in global health;
- what needs to be done in order to make the necessary progress and to overcome bottlenecks and constraints to saving the lives of millions of people every year;
- how can the opportunities presented by the high-level events in 2005 be seized to move the health and development agenda forward and to generate the necessary political will.

Key elements and messages from the discussion included the following:

Scaling up of well-known effective interventions is urgently needed

Health outcomes are unacceptably low across much of the developing world. Sub-Saharan Africa is worst affected, but there are extreme and acute pockets of ill-health in all poor countries. If current trends continue, few low-income countries will achieve the health MDGs. Many speakers pointed specifically to the urgency of addressing issues of equity and access for the poor, particularly women.

The MDGs continue to be very helpful in providing political focus on and momentum for development while serving as a common framework for both debate and action. But while the MDGs give us outcomes, they say little about the means required in order to achieve these outcomes.

While the situation in health, ten years away from the year 2015, is particularly serious there is a strong consensus on what actually needs to be done. Much of the burden of disease can be prevented or cured with known, affordable technologies. Key challenges are that these interventions reach the people who need them, in particular the poor, and that health services are scaled-up in an equitable way.

Access to reproductive health services is critically important

As was pointed out by the panelists, reproductive health services are critically important for making progress on the maternal health goal and it was suggested to add a target on access to these services, as well as specific indicators to track coverage of basic health system functions. Tracking progress and monitoring impact continues to be important for informing policy and measuring performance. In most cases the necessary data, including for indicators on access to reproductive health services at country level, is already available.

Strengthening health systems lies at the heart of the challenge

At the centre of the failure to provide these technologies is a crisis of health systems. In too many countries the health systems needed to do this either do not exist or have collapsed. As one panelist said in responding to a question from the floor: "Without health systems there is no scale up." Strong local health systems are needed to provide universal access to primary health care, including sexual and reproductive services. Furthermore, resources to tackle major diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria going to new global partnerships, such as the Global Fund, need to work as allies in strengthening broad-based health systems.

The task of scaling up services while transforming the way they operate and reach the poor is particularly difficult, but central to achieving real progress. Within this, the challenge of ensuring that the necessary health workers are available at all levels to do the actual work, is probably the single most important element.

Making sure that the necessary health workers are available where they are needed

In many countries, especially in Africa, the shortage of human resources is reaching crisis proportions. This crisis has its roots in part in the process of globalization, particularly as it affects the migration of health workers between cities and rural areas, between countries and between continents. Stocks of health workers are being depleted as they themselves fall victim to the diseases they are attempting to treat, such as HIV/AIDS. More education and training is urgently needed.

Collective, international responsibility should be accepted but action must start at country level. Without well-trained staff in hospitals, clinics and communities there will be little chance of achieving the health MDGs or other goals, such as a massive roll-out of AIDS treatment. Urgency demands action now, but in ways that support the achievement of a longer-term development agenda. The issue of migration, however, is a complex matter that requires careful balancing of rights and responsibilities. While questions were raised about best practices for preventing further 'brain drain' from developing countries, it was agreed that simple regulatory measures alone would not lead to the intended results.

HIV/AIDS is still far from being under control and threatens progress in other areas

The AIDS pandemic is the most immediate and biggest threat to global health and development itself. Affecting women disproportionately and Sub-Saharan Africa bearing the by far heaviest burden, substantial additional investments are critically needed but have not been forthcoming at the pace and volume necessary. Further, many countries don't have in place the financial and administrative capacity to ensure that resources are disbursed timely and that that they go where they need to go. Building this capacity is essential not only in health but also in other areas and the UN is regarded as having to play a much stronger role in collaborating with countries on this.

Strong health systems are central to development and security of countries

The link between health and security was underlined by several speakers. It was argued that, again, health systems capacities were essential not only in the early detection of disease outbreaks, but also in the effective response to them. More generally and equally important, it was agreed that being healthy and having access to better health is fundamental for people's feelings of security, with health systems fulfilling a core social function and contributing to the overall stability of societies.

More needs to be done to address the challenges of fragile states

Special attention needs to be given to the situation of fragile states, in particular those coming out of conflict, and the contribution that can be made by humanitarian actors in providing health services while building the capacity for the longer term development of health systems. A lot can be learned from past experience in such difficult environments, including for example the value of repairing existing, however insufficient, health care provision rather than starting ambitious reform programmes in the middle of what still are mostly unstable and unsafe environments.

Governments need to set the right priorities for development

Governments need to recognize that investment in their health systems is essential for their countries' development – not only for the individual sector but as key enabler for poverty reduction and economic development. Panelists also underlined, however, the importance of investments outside of the health sector, in particular in education and water and sanitation, as well as in general infrastructure like communications, transportation and other areas impacting on health outcomes. Success is possible, but we need to scale up our efforts now.

More and better aid for health and development is needed

The role of both more and better aid for health was emphasized, as well as the need for external partners, including UN agencies, to provide consistent advice to partner countries on macroeconomic implications of increased aid. Equally important is more predictable aid and its harmonization. The UN has an important role to play to improve overall coherence and the challenge of ensuring that development impact is as positive as it can be.

2005: a window of opportunity

The global momentum around the MDGs provide important opportunities for development and health, especially in the run-up to the high level meetings in the summer of 2005 and the summit in September. These opportunities are primarily political, but also with regard to important questions around financing and the future of international development. Major breakthroughs are needed if the international goals and targets for health are to be met and the lives of millions of people are to be saved.

Summary Roundtable 4: Global partnerships and financing development

Lead organization: UNCTAD

The discussion on partnerships focused on four themes: trade; investment (including science and technology); debt and aid; and implementation at country level.

Policy coherence and practices in partnerships for development

A good example of a partnership for development between developed and developing countries is provided by Japan's policies vis-a-vis its South East Asian neighbors (e.g. South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore), beginning in the late 1950s – early 1960s until the 1980s. The coherence between Japan's policies on trade, FDI, ODA and technology towards these countries, and also with the domestic policies adopted by the South East Asian countries, brought benefits to all partners. For example, South East Asian countries invested heavily in education, which allowed them to absorb the technology transferred by Japanese FDI; and Japanese companies investing in South East Asia were able to lower their production costs.

The *best* partnerships are tailor-made to meet the challenges on the ground and the interest of the investors. Effective dialogue and mutual understanding among stakeholders are paramount to achieving desired goals. Appreciation for complementary strengths and obligations of all stakeholders is fundamental. Setting clear targets at the outset, transparency, problem solving techniques, a well defined system for monitoring, evaluation and reporting are the building blocks for successful programmes. The underlying principle for a strong relationship requires treatment of both parties as equal partners.

Trade and investment

Actions needed outside the WTO on which the September Summit should take decisions include:

- Creation of a trade capacity building fund to enhance production, economic diversification, adjustment and competitiveness of low income countries. This could be jointly administered by the World Bank, WTO, UNCTAD and UNDP.
- Creation of a mechanism for the stabilization of commodity prices.
- Revival of international compensatory financing mechanisms to redress trade and revenue losses by developing countries from trade liberalization, tariff preference erosion or adverse terms of trade.

"Quick win" actions in trade include:

- Immediate agreement on the end date for agricultural export subsidies, including an early end to cotton subsidies;
- Commitment to an early elimination of tariff peaks and escalation against exports of developing countries;
- Commitment not to circumvent the elimination of quotas on textiles and clothing exports of developing countries;
- Moratorium on anti-dumping actions against low income countries;
- End to abusive use of sanitary/phytosanitary standards and similar measures to restrain exports of low income countries;
- Full participation of developing countries in standard setting processes;
- Review of the development dimension of the TRIPS agreement;
- On the global partnership for trade, the EU believes that the international community should commit to increasing and improving trade related assistance for developing countries. Such increases should be demand-driven. This requires that trade is mainstreamed in the national development strategies of

developing countries. And the most advanced developing countries should contribute to enhanced market access for poorer developing countries. LDCs and the most vulnerable developing countries should be allowed to open their markets very gradually;

- Preferential market access is necessary for the development of developing countries. The EU is reviewing its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) providing increased benefits to developing countries, notably the vulnerable economies;
- For the United States, trade, democratization, and stability are mutually supportive. Generally, democratization leads to increased economic liberalization. The reverse is also true. The surge of countries liberalizing their economies closely tracks the trend towards democracy around the globe. The number of countries openly electing their leaders increased from about 40 in 1974 to over 120 today.

Debt and aid

- Governments alone cannot fulfil their development objectives, including reaching the MDGs, without support from other sources. This is where partnerships become relevant and necessary. In Monterrey and Johannesburg, the international community committed to partnerships that complement rather than substitute government efforts in financing and implementing development strategies.
- The international community should consider debt-for-sustainable-development swaps for resource mobilization for development.
- In 2004, the Paris Club and others moved swiftly to reduce/cancel Iraq's debt. Many have asked why the same cannot be done for other countries whose situation in terms of relative need, equity and merit are comparable to Iraq.
- There is a widespread debate between creditors on providing debt relief with either concessional loans or grants. For the Ambassador of Nigeria, whatever the form of debt relief, it should not be used to pay off arrears or settle commitments with multilateral institutions. Furthermore, debt relief that does not provide tangible resources should not be counted as aid, because what developing countries need most is additional resources to scale-up investments in both social and productive sectors of their economies. The UK Government's announcement that it will not link aid to privatization programmes, and its call on other countries to emulate this example, should be commended.
- The Millennium Project's definition of debt sustainability as the level of debt consistent with meeting the MDGs while at the same time arriving in 2015 without a new debt overhang should be adopted. Debt sustainability assessments should reflect the perspective of the debtors, and not only creditors. Argentina is a prime example of both the promise and limitation of determining debt sustainability thresholds. A situation where creditors insist on a prescribed course of action without heeding the cries of the debtor in setting a manageable ceiling beyond which the debtor cannot handle does not augur well for good creditor-debtor relationships and confidence building.
- There is dire need for mutual accountability and shared responsibility between creditors and debtors in ensuring good lending practices and debt management. The suggestion that collective action clauses may be the answer ought to be scrutinized more carefully, especially with regard to sovereign debts. After all, there aren't sufficient bonds outstanding to make collective action clauses work effectively.
- A good strategy to manage debt is one that addresses commitments from the perspective of balancing asset and liability accounts together. Creditors should base their actions on assessed needs rather than subjective criteria. The establishment of investor relations should produce a two-way traffic for information exchanges between creditors and debtors.
- Multilateral financial institutions should play the role they were established to do, and there should be no duplication of roles. For instance, the IMF should address the liquidity needs of its members, while the

World Bank should focus on providing development assistance. The Paris Club should not address liquidity challenges of countries nor should it play the role of debt collector for multilateral institutions.

Implementation at country level

The World Bank and IMF plan to undertake a review of the PRS initiative this year, which marks the fifth anniversary of this initiative. The Review will include five themes:

- Strengthening the medium term orientation of the PRS approach;
- Using the PRS as a mutual accountability framework between countries/donors;
- Broadening and deepening meaningful participation;
- Enhancing links between PRS, medium term expenditure frameworks and budgets;
- Tailoring the PRS approach to conflict-affected in fragile states.

Summary Roundtable 5: Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Lead organization: UNIFEM

Introduction

UNIFEM convened a roundtable discussion on 17 March in collaboration with DESA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO and the Millennium Project, on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The meeting focused on achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major UN Conferences and Summits. The panel explored how institutions are responding – or failing to respond – to forward agreed commitments. It presented views on the structures of institutions that perpetuate gender discrimination and provided examples of how changes are beginning to emerge. The panel described how multi-stakeholder partnerships, broad-based participation, and support for gender equality goals within the broader public can contribute to sustained transformation toward gender equality, identifying promising practices as well as institutional blockages. The discussion highlighted recommendations from The Millennium Project's Task Force 3, 2005 report *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women.*

The moderator posed a number of questions to the panel:

- How can institutions become more accountable to gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of the Millennium Declaration?
- What are the characteristics of an institution that is accountable to gender equality?
- What are the enabling factors that transform institutions to become accountable to gender equality and women's rights and what are the blockages?
- How can we stimulate greater progress in supporting institutions to become accountable to gender equality?

Key elements and messages from the discussion included the following:

Centrality of gender equality

Gender equality is central to the upcoming Millennium Summit + 5 as is the need for the Beijing PfA and CEDAW to inform the Summit and the MDGs. The panel noted that the Seven Strategic Priorities of Task Force 3 for achieving gender equality are the *minimum* requirements to reinforce all of the MDGs. The FAO emphasized the centrality of women's education in relation to issues of nutrition, and hence to overall poverty reduction. Civil society was encouraged to lobby representatives at the ECOSOC hearings (23 – 24 June 2005).

Create specific MDGs on reproductive health and violence against women

The absence of reproductive rights and violence against women (VAW) from the MDGs and VAW from the report of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change was noted. It was suggested that specific targets or indicators on reproductive health and rights, and one on violence against women be established.

Return to a Human Rights basis

In general, gender-responsive institutions are more likely to be found and succeed in contexts that have an overall commitment to equity and justice. Transformatory goals live uneasily in large development agencies and in an increasingly conservative fiscal and policy environment organizations will tend to concentrate on what they believe is their core business tracked by concrete results. The focus within the MDGs has shifted from gender equality and women's empowerment to poverty reduction. There is much less focus on rights, security and ending violence, thereby requiring the strengthened capacity of women to claim their rights through communication and protection from intimidation, along with the need for a return of the human rights commitments set forth in the World Conferences of the 1990's as a basis for the MDGs.

Work for long-term change

It is important to work over the long term for systematic change to address gender equality. The results-oriented emphasis on "quick wins" in the MDGs can have a negative impact on work toward gender equality. The household is a key institution for observing such long-term progress, such as in Ecuador where levels of education for girls have risen dramatically from the previous generation and girls are increasingly empowered to claim their rights.

Strengthen resources and implement agreed commitments

Despite an improvement in the rhetoric and increased awareness of gender equality, implementation and resource gaps remain. Goodwill and declarations of good intentions are not sufficient to ensure women's empowerment. Indicators of questionable levels of commitment at the 49th session of the CSW were government-agreed resolutions which consistently noted that 'no new resources would be required'. The implementation gap is related to the capacity gap, exemplified by relative lack of human resources and the weakness of gender focal points in mainstream institutions.

Increase women's representation

The weakness of women's presence in governance and within development institutions was noted as one cause of the failure, thus far, to implement commitments to gender equality. For example, too little progress has been made to achieve the commitment of 30% female representation in Parliaments. Women's representation is essential to advancing development, hence panelists advocated for a boost in women's

representation in governance, within the architecture of institutions and through gender experts with requisite standing to influence decisions.

Systematize and strengthen gender equality mechanisms within existing institutions

Within institutional structures, the advancement of gender equality is constrained when it is one of many competing agendas, lacks a critical mass of change-agents and is caught up in the confusion over gender mainstreaming. A positive example of change within women's organizations in Colombia demonstrated the need for a clear set of priorities for gender equality advocates. The formerly splintered groups honed their numerous competing agendas to a coherent and agreed set of messages in order to influence the peace process.

Within the United Nations system, field experiences of engendering CCA/UNDAFs, PRSPs, and NEPAD, demonstrated that regional inter-agency cooperation was an important mechanism for enhancing action on gender equality within institutions and processes. The TCPR is another positive roadmap for the future, with clear points highlighted for ways of strengthening the UNCTs work on gender equality.

Eliminate institutional blockage

Institutions were defined as formal and informal rules that determine who does what, who gets what, what counts, and who decides. Formal organizations, because they are embedded in social contexts, tend to reflect and reproduce existing power imbalances. So while their formal rules may specify non-discrimination in serving a population, they often operate according to rules and values that may be hidden – which *do* discriminate against women and the poor. It is necessary to disaggregate institutional activities and shift mandates in ways that allow us to understand what they do well and to hold them accountable for those outcomes. Four strategies for making organizations more responsive to women's interests: 1) Allow political access by constituents, with substantial gender expertise in place; 2) Track progress toward positive social change rather than through discrete countable measures that are poorly connected to women's empowerment; 3) Create an institutional culture that does not perpetuate power imbalances and the public-private divides in society (e.g. women's unpaid labor as a subsidy to support men's public participation); 4) Examine how the work is conceived and whom it serves through gender-sensitive norms and understandings of rights, economics, and governance.

Summary Roundtable 6: Environmental sustainability

Lead organization: UNEP and UN-Habitat

The Roundtable provided for a dialogue on the importance of ensuring environmental sustainability, and implementing the commitments made by the international community in this field, as a foundation for achieving the other internationally agreed development goals. Special emphasis was accorded to Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7 on 'Environmental Sustainability', which focuses on the integration of the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes, the reversal of the loss of environmental resources, the reduction by half of the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, and the achievement of significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

As described in the background paper prepared for the roundtable by UNEP and UN-Habitat, with input from a number of other agencies, the MDGs were in many cases not only reaffirmed but enhanced in the outcome of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and accompanying Declaration. The recognition that environmental sustainability is a necessary condition for sustainable development and for the achievement of all the other internationally goals

was reaffirmed in the WSSD outcomes, and highlighted in various reports, including those of the Millennium Project. The project maintains that "Quite simply, Environmental Sustainability is the foundation upon which achieving all the other Millennium Development Goals must be built", and underlines the vital link between environment and defeating poverty. The link between poverty and environment was also highlighted in the report of the SG's Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

Also acknowledged are the linkages between urban poverty, slums and the other internationally agreed development goals. In the year 2007, for the first time, the majority of the world's population will live in urban areas. This demographic shift from rural to urban will result increasingly in the urbanization of poverty, characterized by the increasing numbers of city dwellers who are suffering from basic physical and social deficiencies, such as lack of adequate shelter, clean water and sanitation. The Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II), which adopted the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda, recognized that more holistic, inclusive and participatory policies and strategies and actions are required to address urban poverty and to make the world's cities and communities safe, healthy and equitable. The commitment of world leaders to achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 and the inclusion in the WSSD Johannesburg Declaration of *adequate shelter* as one of the key priority areas, underscore the fact that urban poverty must be directly addressed in order to achieve all the other internationally agreed development goals.

It is against this background that roundtable 6 on *Environmental Sustainability* was held during the preparatory meeting for the 2005 ECOSOC High-Level segment in 2005. The main conclusions of the meeting, based on the presentations of the six panelists and the subsequent interventions by Governments, UN agencies and NGOs can be summarized as follows:

Sustainable management of resources underpins development and environmental sustainability is the foundation on which achieving all the MDGs must be built. The Millennium Declaration, the WSSD JPOI and Johannesburg Declaration, the Declaration on Cities and other Human settlements in the New Millennium and the Habitat Agenda, along side the outcome of the other major UN conferences and summits, represent a global consensus and commitments to bring the vast majority of the world people out of the poverty trap.

Current projections are that 1 billion people will live in slums by 2020. The goal of achieving a significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers would therefore, if met, only impact on approximately 10%. Therefore consideration must be given to re-asses this target, and steps should be taken to not only support existing efforts being undertaken by slum residents, but also to prevent to prevent new slum formation and increasingly provide self-help housing and accessible and serviced land in addition to dealing with the existing phenomenon. The Millennium Project Task Force on Urban Slums recommended to take specific and forceful measures to stop slum formation over the next 15-20 years; improving substantially the lives of at least 100M slum dwellers, while providing adequate alternatives to new slum formation. The findings relate to the importance of the urban poor as positive actors for improving their own settlements, the essential role of both local and central government, placing the poor at the centre of all policies, programmes and plans and the local focus, involving all partners, including donors to achieve the goals. Recommendations include regularizing and upgrading existing informal settlements, providing a viable and affordable alternative to new slum formation through assisted self-help housing on accessible and serviced land, improving governance, supporting and enacting local pro-poor strategies, providing adequate and affordable land, infrastructure and services, mobilizing resources and investment, empowering local action, and monitoring progress. The creation of "Millennium Cities", where cities are invited to embrace the MDGs and formulate locally based MDG poverty strategies was also recommended.

By 2007 more than half of the world's population will live in cities, many of which are respectively located in coastal zones and classified as mega-cities. Coastal management plans must be integrated into urban

infrastructure planning. In this context water and sanitation policies must be addressed in a holistic manner, bearing mind the linkages with freshwater aquifers, integrated water resource management and disease prevalence associated with inefficient waste management in rapidly urbanising settlements. Such a holistic approach is particularly relevant in Small Island Developing States, where early warning systems could assist in preventing extreme situations. SIDS are particularly vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters, climate change and sea level rise and need support to build capacity and reduce their vulnerability to external forces, as well as to manage freshwater and groundwater resources. The Millennium Task force on water and sanitation highlighted the need to move sanitation at the top of the agenda, to integrate water and sanitation policies, planning and investment strategies into national priorities by making them MDG based, to adopt quick win actions, to focus on community based franchising for rural service delivery, to focus on sustainable service delivery, to give high priority to hand washing, hygiene education, treating safe water at the household level, school sanitation with separate facilities for boys and girls, to promote total sanitation coverage and public sanitation, and treat sanitation as individual right and a civic responsibility.

There is a growing need to build capacities at national levels to enable governments to mainstream sound environmental management practices into their sustainable development policies. Environmental sustainability underpins many of the development goals, especially in terms of ecosystems management and water supply, loss of biodiversity, land degradation and food production, health and child mortality, energy accessibility, etc.

It is evident that many of the development goals are not adequately being disseminated at local government levels. This situation should be addressed, perhaps through an international event where majors and municipal authorities could participate in sharing their knowledge and best practices. World Environment Day 2005, to be held in San Francisco, could be an opportunity to promote the Millennium Development Goals at local government level, as they are in the forefront in dealing with, and addressing, many of the goals. Similar opportunities are presented by the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development and the Decade of Water for Life. The importance of addressing the needs of the population at the local level and promoting the MDGs were highlighted. The engagement of all stakeholders, including the slum dwellers who are already implementing action to improve their living conditions; security of tenure which is essential to effectively address the challenges of urban poverty; recognition of the right to access for all, local to local cooperation, provision of adequate international support through ODA, including capacity building, are essential to achieving sustainable urban development and for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. Leadership of cities is crucial, particularly as local authorities are not sufficiently involved in policy formulation at national and international levels, nor are they normally recipients of funding to achieve MDG related targets.

In terms of meeting the goals there is evidence that sub-Sahara Africa is most at risk of not meeting the targets. The time has come not to focus on good governance before assistance, or vice versa, but to apply a staged approach, such as learning by doing. This can be equally applicable in terms of the promotion of secure tenure as it could be in ecologically responsible practices. Among the possibilities for support are pure grant aid to the poorest countries and to follow a fast track approach with pilot countries that would receive rapid infusion of ODA for water supply and sanitation.

Summary Roundtable 7: Decisions needed to implement the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals at the country-level: How to advance an MDG-based approach to poverty reduction

Lead organizations: UNDP and the Millennium Project

Using the ten key recommendations of the UN Millennium Project as a framework, the panelists were asked to present their views on two issues:

- Which concrete decisions needed to be taken prior to the September summit to empower countries to pursue goal-oriented development strategies?
- Which decisions needed to be reached at the summit to effectively support countries in the implementation of all internationally agreed development goals?

Pre-Summit decisions:

In general, participants welcomed the Millennium Project's recommendations as positive and implementable. The Project appropriately highlights the need to overcome poverty traps and vulnerabilities by investing in people (health and education), infrastructure, and the physical environment. In addition to broad support for the overarching argument on the need for greater resources and aid for development, several speakers stressed that key challenges to achieving the MDGs also included reduction of trade barriers, increase in development aid, debt relief, and reduction of corruption. Specific proposals made for action prior to the September Summit were:

- A decision should be made before September to enable the UN to play a greater role on trade issues.
- World leaders should address trade imbalances by removing barriers to free trade, including unlimited access of products of LDCs, trade preferences, and withdrawal of production subsidies, and commodities. Africa needs to remain a priority.
- "Quick-win" initiatives should be launched.
- Some concern was expressed that the achievement of MDGs in middle-income countries should not be taken for granted. **Strategies should be developed before September to address pockets of poverty in these countries.**
- One or two SIDS should be included among "fast track" countries.
- Innovative financing is needed to complement ODA commitments. **The summit needs to adopt new sources of financing**, including for example a $1 international tax on plane tickets. Innovative sources of financing for development and appropriate mechanisms to channel resources need to be further explored.
- ODA absorption capacities are greater than generally believed. **At the June Meeting, concrete actions should be taken to honor commitments of 0.7% ODA made at Monterrey including the adoption of a timeline for achieving the 0.7 target by 2015.**
- Aid needs to be better coordinated: A mosquito net would not work unless you had a house and a bed. Donors should set simpler and more coordinated requirements for aid with the Summit reaffirming commitments to implement recent OECD agreements.
- There is a need for a stronger engagement of civil society organizations. **The June hearings should enable CSOs to provide meaningful inputs to the September summit.**

Summit outcomes and post-Summit actions:

- Developing countries need to deepen their commitment to pro-poor policy reforms – many countries have made significant progress, for example through PRSP planning (with some even reaching decision point on debt forgiveness).
- Developing countries need to develop greater capacities to utilize international money markets to build domestic resources.
- Debt servicing needs to be fair, adapted to country needs and preserve international lending mechanisms.
- Mobilizing domestic resources are crucial and need to include fiscal and budgetary provisions.
- Regional initiatives, such as investment for infrastructure in South America, should be supported. These experiences, if successful, could be replicated, for example through South-South initiatives. **Commitments should be made at the September Summit in line with Recommendation 6.**
- The **UN should be given a central role in follow-up to the decisions made at the September Summit**. ECOSOC should be entrusted with the follow-up, but needs to be strengthened to fulfill this role. Moreover, the UN's operational agencies need to operate more effectively and in a more coordinated manner with more stable financing.
- The **Summit needs to adopt a strong commitment to national ownership of development strategies** – actions need to be coordinated with sector specific strategies and need to support long-term development. National strategies also need to be more ambitious, reflect local conditions and go beyond the MDG targets if appropriate.
- The September summit should pay special attention to the needs of the least developed countries. Least developed countries, however, also need to work toward good governance and address corruption in a firm and transparent manner.

Summary Roundtable 8: Building State Capacity to meet the MDGs: Governance, Institutions, human resources and human rights

Lead organizations: DESA/Division for Public Administration and Management and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Roundtable on *Building State Capacity to Meet the MDGs* was organized by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of UNDESA for the ECOSOC 2005 High-Level Segment on "Achieving the internationally agreed developing goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities." The Roundtable took the advantage of the presence of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration which was holding its Fourth Session in New York. The Roundtable specifically focused on the following five areas:

- MDGs and national/local governance
- MDGs and international governance
- MDGs and human rights
- MDGs and institutions and institutional Capacity with a focus on NEPAD
- MDGs and human resources capacity

Key elements and messages from the discussion included the following:

MDGs and national and local governance

The neglect or underestimation of governance and institutions, in particular, can undermine policy reforms and progress for the Millennium Development Goals. Both the Millennium Declaration and the Annual Reviews of the UN Secretary General on the MDGs underpinned the importance of governance and of institutions in securing steady and sustainable progress to agreed international commitments and objectives. To some speakers separating policies from the institutional and governmental context is not only impractical but may also lead developing countries to experience poor outcomes because of such an arbitrary division.

Political commitment and will is the first step before the consideration of technical and administrative matters. In this light, the unequal distribution of power and increased inequalities, particularly at the national level, were factors impacting adversely on good governance and on securing shared socio-economic objectives. It was pointed out that trust and partnerships must characterize not only national processes but international relations. A panellist pointed out that while emphasis is placed on the national authorities in rooting out corruption, there is reluctance to agree on repatriation of wealth that was siphoned off abroad through corruption. This appears as double standards for the ethical principles underpinning the combating of malfeasance to be equally applicable at the national and international levels. Further, Official Development Assistance, ODA, is not totally free of conditionalities, and often is subjected to the bureaucratic procedures of the various donors. Thus, while transparency and accountability for ODA is justly sought, this should be applied to all partners.

MDGs and international governance

Reference was made to international governance and the contracting effects of structural adjustment and of the economic liberalization of the last 25 years. This was contrasted with the period of relatively high growth and greater equality that were sustained for the first 25 years subsequent to the Second World War. Though structural adjustment has been formally supplanted by Poverty Reduction Strategy for the Bretton Woods Institutions, the macro economic policy stance has not materially changed. Targeting inflation has generally had an adverse effect on economic expansion for developing countries while the secular worsening of the terms of trade has continued. The impact of economic liberalization seems to have also reduced the policy space for the national governments while the openness of their economies has meant greater volatility and uncertainty in economic performance. The increase in income inequalities, coupled with the decrease in policy space and the concentration of foreign direct investment primarily in mineral extraction and resource exploitation, does not portent well for many developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

MDGs and institutions and institutional capacity with focus on NEPAD

In the case of Africa, which was explicitly recognised as meriting a special case in the Millennium Declaration, it is increasingly appreciated that for policy purpose, one size does not fit all. It is found that the diverse traditional practices of communities are compatible with the principles of inclusiveness and participation, and therefore, offer the opportunities of cooperation with institution-building processes of good governance. Further, and taking into cognizance various cultural nuances, it is important to keep in mind that while measuring governance progress, the donor indices may not always reveal the real picture nor would they be helpful in securing progress. In this regard, mention was made of the recent initiatives taken by the Africa Union to review progress through a peer review mechanism.

MDGs and human resources capacity

The intertwined importance of capacity building and that of human resource development were emphasized by several speakers. Clearly, human resource development, particularly those that pertain to

planning and implementation, should not be confined to the public sector alone. Many NGOs and the private sector currently partner with government in the provision of public services. In this, there is a two way process, on the one hand, to equip government to deal with partners, including the private sector and NGOs; and on the other, to upgrade the capacities of civil society in dialoguing with government. Several speakers also stressed the importance of monitoring the progress of health and education of the population.

The importance of human resource development was also reaffirmed in the discussion, which together with human rights, were powerful antidotes to inequity, extremism and intolerance. While it was recognized that "one size does not fit all" this did not obviate the need to learn from each other, to search and be aware of the various options available, and to strengthen the discussions and analysis of the challenges ahead.

MDGs and human rights

There was a large measure of congruence that human rights were not purely objectives of the MDGs but are means or adjuncts by which MDGs can be solidly secured. Thus, concurrently, human rights, including economic and social rights, are fundamental values of the Millennium Declaration. Increasingly it is appreciated that these developmental rights also serve as the conduits for securing the eight Millennium Development Goals. In a graphic sense, human rights determine both the height, including such attributes as good governance, stability and security, as well as the base of the development pyramid.

Prerequisites for strong and effective government

Subsequent speakers focused on the elements or prerequisites for strong and effective government. Four elements were singled out for special consideration:

- Efficient and effective public administration that includes an enabling regulatory framework for investment and the private sector. This, complemented by a tax administration that adheres to equity principles and is corruption-resistant, will enable an increase of the tax to GDP ratio;
- An equitable decision-making process – inclusive, pro-poor, sensitive to civil society, and accountable;
- A transparent and accountable development management system and one that can allocate resources without bias in favour of special interest or prone to malfeasance; and
- Encouragement of decentralization linked to the demands and wishes at community level. Devolution of power not only reduces transaction costs in the provision of services but ensures responsiveness and greater participation. However, there are certain standards and norms intrinsic to national goals and objectives that may not be amenable to decentralization.

Models of good governance

Several speakers were keen to build on what has been learned from the past experiences of governance and development. Though these lessons were perhaps simple or obvious, they were nonetheless worth underscoring. In particular, that there was no single model of good governance, and that diversity in practices should be acknowledged; that contemporary issues and concerns did not respect the departmental or functional divide of administrative structures and that new and innovative ways of response were required; that respect for culture and the specificities of the enabling environment was not an ill-afford luxury but the sine qua non for sustainability and acceptance of policy reforms; and that overall, there was an appreciation of the power of ideas and institutional capacities for effecting change which was not always amenable to financial resources.

Other issues

In the various exchanges that followed, several issues were discussed including: the encouragement of national demands for improving governance; the practical implications of human rights principles; the importance of focusing on agreed outcomes regarding human rights and partnerships; the differing interpretations and distinction between good governance and democracy; and maintaining the same ethos of independence and commitment whether national, regional or international concerns that were raised in the various human development reports.